

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, September 10, 2004

CONTACT: David Moulton or

Mark Bayer (202) 225-2836

MARKEY STATEMENT ON THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11 TERRORIST ATTACKS

Stronger Cargo, Chemical and Nuclear Security Needed

Washington, DC: Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, today released the following statement on progress towards strengthening homeland security three years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

“On Saturday, we will commemorate the third anniversary of the most devastating attack against our country since Pearl Harbor. It will be a solemn day and an occasion to remember the men and women who perished on that clear Tuesday morning three autumns ago. This painful anniversary also will provide the opportunity to give thanks for the heroism that so many Americans demonstrated in the face of extreme danger on that day. For the families of the victims, September 11 will always be a difficult date on the calendar. Our country owes a debt of gratitude to family members who continue to push for reforms that strengthen our ability to detect and deter terrorist attacks. Without their persistence, the 9/11 Commission never would have been established in the first place. The Bush Administration initially opposed the creation of the 9/11 Commission, and House Speaker Hastert and Republican Majority Leader DeLay have expressed resistance to adoption of the Commission’s recommended reforms. This is troubling, and I believe we will need continued pressure from the families of the victims for Congress to move forward to enact the Commission’s proposed reforms.

“This solemn anniversary also requires us to evaluate the persistence of the serious security threat we face and our vulnerability to attack through loopholes that, unfortunately, remain unaddressed three years after September 11, 2001. The Administration has made a dangerous error by focusing on Iraq, where there was no al Qaeda threat, and neglecting to follow through in Afghanistan, where Osama bin Laden remains hidden and where the government remains in a precarious state, threatened by warlords intent on reviving the opium economy while the international force is undermanned and under resourced. Americans would understand if 1000 American lives and \$200 billion in American tax dollars were being spent to ensure that al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, and the Taliban terrorist protectors were permanently defeated in Afghanistan. Americans don’t understand, however, making those sacrifices in Iraq where there are no weapons of mass destruction, no Taliban, no Osama bin Laden, and, until the US-led invasion, no al Qaeda. Americans think we are on the wrong track in

Iraq, that al Qaeda has used Iraq as a source of new terrorist energy, and that we must therefore assume that a new attack on our own soil is just a matter of time.

“We must redouble our efforts to close our gaping security loopholes immediately. In many areas, policies remain focused on winning the last war instead of devising and implementing new security solutions to address new vulnerabilities that ingenious, patient terrorists are poised to exploit.

“For example, we all are now accustomed to taking off our shoes and putting them on the belt to be x-rayed at airport checkpoints. Why do we do this? The reason is that Richard Reid, the so-called “Shoe Bomber” who tried to blow up a plane a few years ago, had plastic explosives hidden in his shoes. While screening passengers’ shoes may still make sense today, it’s unacceptable and dangerous that almost none of the cargo that’s carried on passenger planes is physically inspected for explosives or other dangerous materials before it’s loaded aboard.

“I have been pushing the Bush Administration and Republicans in Congress to adopt a policy that subjects this cargo – which amounts to 22 percent of all the air freight that’s shipped in the U.S. every year – to the same level of screening performed on passengers’ checked and carry-on luggage. Although the House voted twice overwhelmingly last year – by votes of 278 to 146 and 347 to 47 – to require 100% screening of cargo carried on passenger planes, this badly needed provision has not been signed into law due to stiff resistance from the Bush Administration and the airline industry.

“We need to do more to strengthen security at chemical plants and during transport of extremely hazardous chemicals when they are moved around the country. When the Homeland Security Committee met to consider the authorization bill for the Department of Homeland Security, I planned to offer an amendment to require additional security measures at chemical plants, including a mandate that chemical companies perform vulnerability assessments and implement security plans to address security vulnerabilities, use “inherently safer technologies” (IST) that pose less of a health risk when a worst-case terrorist attack could result in more than 10,000 people being harmed, and protect the rights of whistleblowers who report security violations. I was unable to offer my amendment when the Republican chairman of the Homeland Security Committee canceled committee consideration of the authorization bill.

I also have introduced H.R. 4824, which would require a range of security upgrades for the transport of extremely hazardous materials, such as extra guards and surveillance technologies, pre-notification of shipments to local first responders, and re-routing of shipments of extremely hazardous materials around areas of concern.

“Nuclear plant security continues to fall short of what is required. Nuclear power plant designs were found in the caves of Afghanistan where terrorists operated, and the 9-11 Commission report indicated that the Indian Point nuclear power plant was one of the targets considered by the 9-11 hijackers. Nevertheless, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has allowed the nuclear industry’s lobbying group to hire Wackenhut

Corporation, which also guards half the nation's nuclear power plants, to conduct the force-on-force security testing at nuclear reactors. The NRC has also announced that the results of these tests will be kept secret. Letting the nuclear industry test itself and keep the results secret poses an unacceptable conflict of interests and undermines public confidence in the NRC. I will continue to push my legislation, which was made part of the Energy bill, to ensure that the NRC, and not the nuclear industry, is in charge of security testing at nuclear power plants.

“The 9/11 Commission faulted our lack of imagination as a factor that contributed to the failure to thwart the 9/11 hijackers. It does not take much imagination to envision determined terrorists taking advantage of these dangerous security loopholes. The painful legacy of 9/11 should not be further compounded by failure in Congress to take real action to close them. Saturday's anniversary is a time for reflection, and it also should be a call to action to move forward with these urgently needed reforms.”